



PRESS RELEASE

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY (ASN) APPLAUDS CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR INCREASING COMPETITION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN TRANSPLANT CARE

Highlights

- ASN has called for increased accountability and for patients to be optimally served in the U.S. transplant system.
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Administrator Johnson and Leadership of the Energy and Commerce Committee expressed commitment to establish competition and accountability in transplant care and ensure the system is supported by best-in-class vendors.
- Responding to ASN advocacy, Rep. Bucshon and Rep. Kelly are introducing the Securing the U.S. Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce signaled support for the Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act (SUS OPTN Act) with the support of Energy and Commerce and HRSA leadership to increase competition and accountability in the U.S. transplant system and ensure people seeking a transplant are served by best-in-class vendors.
- Earlier in the week, ASN and 25 other organizations representing kidney patients, caregivers, and health professionals [commended HHS Secretary Xavier](#) Becerra for HHS and HRSA's commitment to the aims of the OPTN Modernization Initiative, an effort the bill intends to enable.

Washington, D.C. (April 20, 2023) — Members of the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce signaled support for the Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act (SUS OPTN) during the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee *Hearing on Existing Healthcare Workforce and Primary Care Programs*.

Introduced by Representative Larry Bucshon, MD and Representative Robin Kelly, the Securing the U.S. OPTN Act aims to provide the Health Resources and Services

Administration (HRSA) statutory authority to fully implement HRSA's Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) Modernization initiative.

In response to the hearing, ASN President Michelle A. Josephson, MD, FASN, stated, "the SUS OPTN Act allows for reforms that represent crucial, foundational changes to ensure America's kidney health ecosystem serves patients as optimally as possible," continuing "ASN commends the introduction of the SUS OPTN Act and looks forward to working with this committee on a bipartisan basis to ensure that the U.S. transplant system serves every American seeking a transplant."

The SUS OPTN Act allows HRSA to include multiple agreements to support OPTN instead of a single contract, broadens the eligibility of organizations who can bid on OPTN contracts, allows HRSA to increase contract amounts, and requires separate boards to govern OPTN and any OPTN contractors.

During the hearing, HRSA Administrator Johnson described HRSA as "laser-focused" on establishing competition and accountability in the U.S. transplant system, reforms organized as HRSA's OPTN Modernization Initiative. Administrator Johnson expressed that HRSA is "pleased to work with" the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on the SUS OPTN Act, noting that the current statute supporting OPTN is over 40 years old and opportunities to modernize the transplant system have been limited.

"If you're an individual or family member of someone in need of an organ transplant, this is the absolute most critical system that you depend on," said Administrator Johnson. Noting the importance of making sure "the system is fair and treats everyone the same," she added that "my responsibility in this seat is that [the OPTN] is run well." To achieve this, "we think that we need best-in-class contractors rather than having all functions of the OPTN tied up in one single competitive bid here. We think there is an opportunity for competition here."

Representative Larry Bucshon, MD, the lead Republican co-sponsor of the SUS OPTN Act, stated that he is introducing the bill to "encourage a competitive process to choose the best contractors for each OPTN function," noting that "With the technology and expertise available today," the "thousands of donated organs that go to waste each year because the process of obtaining organs, matching recipients, transporting them does not happen effectively" is "just unacceptable," especially when they lead to disparities. Further, Dr. Bucshon expressed that the changes were overdue, noting that during his time as a medical resident on transplant service, he "began to understand how the system worked or didn't work even 30 years ago."

Representative Robin Kelly, the lead Democratic sponsor of the SUS OPTN Act, raised health disparities in transplant care, describing them as "tragic inequities that are unacceptable." Representative Kelly continued, "this is why I was glad to see HRSA's

leadership announcing the OPTN Modernization Initiative. As our country continues to move forward at a rapid pace with new technologies becoming available every day, we owe it to our constituents to bring our medical practice to the 21st century and save lives.”

Energy and Commerce Committee Chairwoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers expressed her thanks for the introduction of the SUS OPTN Act, noting, “It will allow HRSA to make OPTN process more competitive, with the ultimate goal of making organs available to more people in need, one area where more work needs to be done.”

The SUS OPTN Act responds to years of advocacy by ASN and community stakeholder organizations. The fundamental and structural improvements included in the SUS OPTN Act will build on and enable further improvements to the transplant system requested by ASN. ASN will continue to work with Congress and HRSA to enact these vital changes and to expand on these efforts to address other areas in transplant care where more must be done.

About ASN

Since 1966, ASN has been leading the fight to prevent, treat, and cure kidney diseases throughout the world by educating health professionals and scientists, advancing research and innovation, communicating new knowledge, and advocating for the highest quality care for patients. ASN has nearly 21,000 members representing 140 countries. For more information, visit www.asn-online.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

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